

Article by Robert Hillman**Introduction to the Context*****ENCOUNTERING CONFLICT*****In this article**

This article is designed to introduce some of the ideas and arguments suggested by the Context *Encountering Conflict* and offers a variety of strategies for unpacking it. It also introduces the four texts set for study in this Context by VCAA in 2008–9.

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Introduction to the Context

ENCOUNTERING CONFLICT

INTRODUCTION

In this Context you will explore the wide variety of ways in which humans encounter conflict, ranging from small-scale confrontations in which as few as two people are involved, to large-scale conflicts, such as wars. Begin by thinking carefully about the title of this Context – *Encountering Conflict*. The word 'encountering' is an important element of its name. Does it suggest that conflict is something one simply comes across, without looking for it? How do people deal with conflict when they encounter it? You may analyse the causes of conflict as well as exploring the effects and outcomes of these encounters. It will also be useful to consider the ways in which conflicts are resolved.

The Context is inviting you to consider the ideas associated with 'encountering conflict' with questions and considerations such as these in mind.

Ongoing Activity: A Context File

Put together a file or folder to house all your notes and materials related to *Encountering Conflict*. By adding to this file regularly, you will build up an excellent resource to draw on when preparing for the SACs and the end of year exam. You will also be able to see how your ideas and point of view on the Context develop and expand throughout the year. You might include:

- notes from class discussions and brainstorming
- articles or images (including cartoons) from newspapers, magazines or websites that have something interesting or different to say about the Context
- useful vocabulary or a word bank for discussing and writing about the Context

- summaries of key ideas and arguments about the Context drawn from the two texts you are studying
- notes on language and structural features of your set texts (i.e. the choices an author makes) which might influence the choices *you* make for your own writing.

BUILDING THE CONTEXT

Building the Context requires developing a range of initial ideas about what the Context means. What issues does it relate to? What questions does it encourage you to think about? You are building the Context broadly at this stage. It is not yet necessary to draw ideas from the texts you are studying. While the parameters of the Context may be endless, you will build an initial framework that you can add to, refine or change as your thinking develops.

Below are several suggested activities for getting started building the Context. You may do these activities individually. In the classroom, different groups may choose different activities and then report their findings to the class as a whole. It may also be useful to revisit these activities at various stages throughout the year to see how your initial thoughts about the Context have changed.

Words and meanings

- Create your own **word bank** which you can add to throughout the year, on your own or in class.
- Begin by brainstorming definitions of the key words of the Context: 'encountering' and 'conflict'.
- Use a dictionary and thesaurus to expand on these definitions and write down several entries that seem helpful or interesting to you.
- Consider the associated words, terms, phrases and meanings that expand these initial key words. Work in groups of three or four and compare and discuss your findings. How do these relate to or contrast with 'encounter' and 'conflict'? It will be useful to repeat this task at various times throughout your study of the Context, to see how these words and their meanings

Keep notes from your individual work and group discussions in your Context file.

change. Below are some associated words and phrases. Start with these. How many other words and phrases can you think of?

Fight	Argue
Disagree	Collide
Clash	Quarrel
Difference of opinion	Controversy
Violence	Struggle
Chance	Unexpected
To oppose	To antagonise

Quotations

- Other people's viewpoints can stimulate and expand your thinking. Use the internet to find relevant quotations about conflict. These will help expand your word bank and also the ideas that you associate with the Context. The quotes can also be used as starting points for discussion and writing topics.

Types of conflict

- Working in small groups, put together a list of types of conflict, such as conflict between individuals, conflict between nations, political conflict or romantic conflict. Consider both small-scale and large-scale conflicts. Groups can then report back to the class and a larger resource list will be created. You may wish to do this in the form of a mind map.

See Chapter 7 *Developing a Context* in the textbook for further suggestions on how to build the Context.

Causes of conflict

- In small groups, brainstorm a second list of all of the factors that might trigger a conflict. Once again, address both small-scale and large-scale conflicts. Your list may include factors such as greed, racial prejudice, differences of opinion or a failure to communicate. Groups can then report back to the class and a larger resource list will be created. Again, you may prefer to do this in the form of a mind map.

- From this resource list have a classroom discussion on how these factors cause conflict, big and small. For example, how might an individual's greed lead to conflict with other people? Is envy between nations the same as envy between people? Do arguments between neighbours have the same causes as aggression between nations, and so on? You might also find it useful to discuss whether some conflicts have multiple causes and how it is that some seemingly minor conflicts become larger and more intense.

Consequences of conflict

- Using the information you have collected in the previous activities, create a table that records some of the possible consequences or effects of conflict. These consequences may be short-term or long-term, both positive and negative or have a public and/or personal impact. There may be considerable overlap between these categories. Consider whether small-scale conflicts can be as devastating as large-scale conflicts such as war. The table below is simply a guide to get you started. There will be many more examples for you to add to it. You may also wish to add to this table throughout the year as your thinking about the Context is refined.

Types of conflict	Causes of conflict	Consequences of conflict
Political conflict	Different beliefs	Challenges to social norms
Workplace conflict	Failure to communicate	Lack of trust; failure to achieve results
Bullying or exclusion	Racism	Low self-esteem, anger or violence

Personal conflict

- Write a short piece recounting a personal experience of conflict. You may have been in conflict with another person, with a group, with an institution or with an idea you have encountered. In your writing, consider the type of conflict, its causes and its consequences. Did you learn anything about yourself? About others? Were you able to resolve it?

IDENTIFYING THE BIG IDEAS

What are the Big Ideas and arguments that emerge from this Context? Before you begin to explore your texts, consider further ways of grouping concepts about *Encountering Conflict* using the following Big Ideas:

Make use of this section before you explore your text in detail. Then revisit these ideas and consider what each text has added to your understanding of them.

- 1 Conflicts involve a clash of ideas, interests and expectations
- 2 People's responses to conflict vary
- 3 Conflict occurs between the powerful and the powerless
- 4 Conflicts may be difficult to resolve
- 5 Conflict can be a catalyst for change

You may find an overlap between many of these ideas. Of course there may be many more Big Ideas in this Context than those identified here. How many more can you identify?

1 Conflicts involve a clash of ideas, interests and expectations

Trigger questions

- Can a conflict have more than one cause?
- Is fear a source of conflict?
- Is the cause of a conflict between nations similar to the cause of a conflict between two individuals?
- What role do different values play in the creation of conflict?

Ideas to get you started

There are many types of conflict, ranging from conflicts within communities and conflicts between nations, to smaller conflicts between family members and individuals and even the conflict that an individual may have with themselves. All conflicts, however, share a similar cause – they are often born from clashing ideas (and ideologies), competing interests and expectations that are not met.

Societies are made up of many different people who all hold different views and values. In this social context conflict is, to some extent, inevitable. It is how conflicting ideas and ideologies are addressed and the way in which they are permitted to be expressed that will determine the nature of any conflict that ensues. If different ideas, views and values are stifled or repressed, they may end up being expressed in unexpected and dangerous ways.

Conflict, whether at a global or personal level, is often a result of miscommunication. Individuals, groups or nations will all have different expectations of a situation. They may struggle to communicate these clearly and as a result a small misunderstanding may be blown out of proportion and lead to a bigger conflict that becomes more difficult to resolve. Conflict is also often caused through a fear of who and what is different. We often remain uninformed about the cultural ideals and needs of members of a community who are different from ourselves or from the mainstream or majority because we are afraid. These fears in turn lead to miscommunication and hostility that on some occasions, as evidenced in the 2005 Cronulla riots, can lead to a violent conflict. As these riots revealed, conflicts are rarely ever one-sided.

Writing activity

- Can you recall a time in which you were unable to clearly communicate something you wanted or believed and as a result this miscommunication led to conflict? Perhaps this was within your family or in a school setting. Write a brief piece exploring the point you were trying to make, why it was difficult to communicate it, and how you would handle the situation differently now to avoid the conflict it created.

Discussion question

- In small groups, discuss the extent to which fear is a major source of conflict. Although fear is often a natural response to many situations, is there any way to avoid it leading to conflict?

2 People's responses to conflict vary

Trigger questions

- Is a person's response to conflict always dictated by the cause of the conflict?
- Are there cultural factors that might contribute to different responses to conflict?
- Is what we call 'manners' really an informal system designed to limit instances of conflict between individuals?

Ideas to get you started

We all encounter and experience some sort of conflict in our lives. Individuals respond to conflict in different ways dependent on their background and past experience of dealing with conflict. Factors that influence how an individual will respond to conflict include their gender and their social and cultural background. Often a person's religious beliefs will also shape how they respond to such situations. For example, many religions, such as Buddhism, advocate pacifism and do not believe in violence as an appropriate response to conflict of any kind. Responses to conflict are also influenced by rules and laws, both informal and formal. It is important to note that a person's desire to avoid conflict is likely to produce a different response to conflict from that of a person actively seeking it out.

Violence is an extreme response to conflict. It is questionable whether violence can ever resolve or end a conflict without effecting even further problems. The use of violence often leads to further violence. Despite its problematic nature and devastating consequences, violence remains one of the most common methods for settling conflict. Not all violence involves physical harm or bloodshed. Violence can also be employed to cause psychological abuse. Bullying someone in response to a conflict or other forms of verbal abuse are also forms of violence.

Activities

- Using the internet and your library, conduct research into the United Nations and the role it plays in responding to conflict between nations. Are any of the methods it employs in these large-scale conflicts similar to how you have responded when you have encountered conflict?
- Over a period of a week, go through an entire copy of the newspaper (world news, local news, business and sport) and clip all the headlines that relate to conflicts of various kinds. Look for political conflict, war, social conflict that arises from crime, and conflict between individuals. Record the headlines and a brief summary in your Context file. You may wish to categorise these conflicts according to the type of conflict they address. What do these headlines suggest about responses to conflict? What differences and similarities in response do you notice across the various types of conflict?

Discussion questions

- Consider a large-scale conflict such as a war and a small-scale conflict such as an argument between two friends. Would the possible responses to these types of conflict be similar or different?
- In small groups, discuss the proposition that the use of violence in a conflict does not solve it. In your discussion, consider the possibility that the use of violence in a conflict is an admission of failure to resolve it. In a war, for example, what other responses might be used before violence is perceived as the only solution?
- 'Turn the other cheek' is a popular saying suggesting that when we are faced with conflict we should turn away and resist reacting or responding. In small groups, discuss whether you think this is more difficult to do than it sounds. Refer to any relevant personal experiences you might have had in your discussion.

3 Conflict occurs between the powerful and the powerless

Trigger questions

- Must the pursuit of power always have a negative impact?
- Do you think that those in positions of power are more or less likely to incite conflict to get what they want?
- Are there always two valid sides to every conflict?

Ideas to get you started

Although conflict is an inevitable part of being human, it is also true that in some cases those in positions of power will find it beneficial or advantageous to initiate conflict with those who have less power. If a person or group with some power and influence feels that they have something to gain from conflict, it will often be less of a risk for them to enter into a conflict with the more vulnerable and weak members of a society. Minority groups, such as particular racial or religious groups, may find themselves in conflict with the majority in their society. These groups often lack the resources necessary to defend themselves, either physically or intellectually, from such attacks. They may lack social, economic and political power, or the other skills needed to protect themselves in the face of aggression from the more powerful. When a conflict does arise, powerful people may also have greater resources available to them to help resolve it.

Activity

- In pairs, locate recent examples of cultural conflict between majority and minority groups in Australian society. Refer to news items or newspaper articles. Make notes in your Context file about these conflicts. In your examples, were the majority groups always powerful and the minority groups always powerless? Were the causes of these conflicts similar or different? What about their consequences and resolutions?

Discussion question

- In small groups, make a list of the kinds of conflicts that may occur between the powerful and the powerless in ordinary, daily life. Can you draw on any experiences from your own life to support your ideas?

4 Conflicts may be difficult to resolve**Trigger questions**

- What types of conflict are the most difficult to resolve?
- Do you think that there are there some conflicts that can never be resolved?

Ideas to get you started

In most conflicts, the parties involved can imagine a resolution. In an argument between two people, for example, the ideal resolution for each person may be that the other person comes to agree with you. In warfare, the ideal solution may be the surrender of the other side. Often, however, resolutions are about compromise – for a solution to be reached, parties will have to be prepared to give and take, and there may not be one outright ‘winner’.

On a global scale, for a solution to a conflict to work, threats to a country’s security or independence must be ruled out. As in personal conflicts, it may be difficult to reach an agreement or solution that all parties are satisfied with. If one side to a conflict remains under threat, the conflict has the potential to break out again. Often the involvement of a third party is required to assist with a resolution. In conflicts between nations, the United Nations attempts to negotiate solutions by freeing each side from the threat. The United Nations

also attempts to enforce the provisions of the International Declaration of Human Rights, which spells out the rights of every human being. Treaties such as this are designed to bring about a resolution to conflict.

Discussion questions

- Working in small groups, discuss the solutions found to conflicts you have each experienced. Did you feel that the solution was just and right? Was the solution imposed on you or did you reach it yourself?

5 Conflict can be a catalyst for change

Trigger questions

- Is it possible to live in a society without conflict?
- Is conflict something we should always avoid?

Ideas to get you started

Although conflict can be difficult and will often have tragic results, it can also be a catalyst for social and political change or personal growth. It can lead to creative solutions to difficult problems and even to improvements in a society or in personal relationships. The 1960s civil rights movement in the United States can be seen as a necessary social conflict without which racial injustice would have continued. The same can be said for the anti-war movement that helped to turn the tide of public opinion against the Vietnam War at the end of the 1960s. Without conflict, Australians would not enjoy the freedoms we now take for granted. All arguments and debates are a form of conflict and even families benefit from the respectful expression of different ideas and views. An argument might even be made for the need for wars, in certain circumstances.

Without conflict, we don't grow. As individuals, our ideas about the world and our place in it develop by being challenged by other people's ideas and viewpoints. We often learn what we think and who we are by being confronted by ideas we don't agree with. If we remain sheltered from opinions we disagree with we also never develop the strength to express or defend our own point of view.

Writing activity

- Write a brief piece about how the following statement suggests something positive or important about conflict in personal relationships, communities or nations: 'You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs.'

Discussion question

- In small groups, discuss how standing up for others might lead to conflict. Have you ever experienced conflict when standing up for yourself? What have you learned or gained from the experience?

EXPLORING THE TEXTS

The material in this section provides an introduction to each text. See the extended articles on the CD-ROM for more detailed analysis.

Studying texts in this area of study has a particular purpose: you are drawing ideas from them to inform and expand your own thinking about the Context. The ideas you have developed when building the Context will help to focus your reading and discussion of the text. As you explore texts, consider how they are connected to the Big Ideas discussed above.

- How do the texts expand and support the way you think about these ideas or arguments?
- Do the texts introduce any new perspectives on the Context?
- Are there any features of the text that might influence your own writing?

The Crucible* by Arthur Miller*Overview**

Fear is one of the greatest agents of conflict. When people are afraid, they often search for security, insulating themselves in what they know and find easy to understand. In *The Crucible*, the seventeenth-century Puritan community of Salem, New England, is overwhelmed by a fear that attacks the foundation of its religious faith. The members of a devout Christian community become persuaded that Satan is at work in their town, inhabiting the bodies, hearts and souls of parishioners. Young girls are accused of practicing witchcraft and, as hysterical accusations fly, begin pointing fingers at one another. Security can

only be restored by identifying the agents of Satan, prosecuting them and, in some cases, putting them to death.

The initial fear that grips the community of Salem evolves into panic. The reader is made aware, however, almost from the beginning of the drama, that the fear and panic has nothing to do with supernatural agents. This fear and panic is the manifestation of profound insecurities within the community, and of the repression of various appetites that people in non-Puritan communities might consider normal. Certain members of the Salem community use this hysteria as an opportunity to air old grievances and longstanding grudges and jealousies, and to indulge deep-rooted superstitions. Goodwill, reason and generosity suffer in this conflict. The play's tragic outcome serves as a warning of the consequences, in any age, when fear and malice grow out of control in a community, or even a nation.

Sample passage

Act 1 (pp. 28–9)

PROCTOR [looking at ABIGAIL now, the faintest suggestion of a knowing smile on his face]: What's this mischief here?

...

ABIGAIL [now softening]: And you must. You are no wintry man. I know you, John. I *know* you. [She is weeping.] I cannot sleep for dreamin'; I cannot dream but I wake and walk about the house as though I'd find you comin' through some door. [She clutches him desperately.]

Summary

John Proctor enters Betty Parris' room. She has taken ill after she was found dancing in the woods with other girls, including Abigail, with whom we later learn Proctor had an affair while she was working in his home. Prior to Proctor's entry, Abigail has threatened the girls with a beating if they reveal what took place in the woods. This exchange between Proctor and Abigail reveals some of their past and their present personal conflict based partly on miscommunication and different expectations.

Questions for exploring ideas

- 1 From this initial interaction between Proctor and Abigail, what do you understand to be the nature of their relationship? What is the nature of their conflict?
- 2 What does this passage reveal about the origins of conflict in Salem?
- 3 What indications are there in Abigail's remarks to suggest that the witchcraft panic in Salem is based on fabrications? Does she use fear to get what she wants?
- 4 How might Abigail's remarks explain her later claims she has seen Satan?
- 5 Can you identify any indications of internal conflict in Proctor's remarks?

Discussion questions

- 1 In small groups, locate evidence in the play that suggests that more than one type of resolution to the Salem conflict was possible. Did the conflict have to end in tragedy? Do any of the characters suggest ways in which a more peaceable outcome might have been achieved?
- 2 Discuss the role that violence plays in the Salem panic. Think broadly of violence as any behaviour that is designed to cause pain to an enemy.

Focus on the features of the text

As well as drawing on ideas from *The Crucible* in your writing about *Encountering Conflict*, remember that the language and style of your writing may also be inspired by the structures and features of the play. For example, the following features of Miller's text may influence how you choose to use language in the texts you create:

- the play draws parallels between two historical conflicts
- the protagonist carries the moral voice of the text and it is with him that reader/audience sympathy lies
- the characters are symbols of ideas about conflict; for example, Danforth and Hathorne represent the abuse of power.

These are only a selection of the key features of the text. What other features can you find?

Activities

- Locate other passages in the play involving Abigail and Proctor that link sexual passion, rejection and internal conflict.
- The panic in Salem stirs up a maelstrom of jealousy and revenge in the community. Locate other passages and scenes in the play that point towards the many motives involved in the Salem conflict. List as many motives as you can – you may wish to link these to characters in a mind map.

When completing these activities consider the key features of the text in your response.

The Line* by Arch and Martin Flanagan*Overview**

War is a form of argument between nations, and sometimes within nations, by means other than dialogue. In *The Line*, Arch Flanagan, an Australian soldier who fought in World War II, tells of his experience of armed combat, while his son, Martin Flanagan, records his own memories of his father after the war, and of other Australians who experienced combat in World War II. The savagery of combat is detailed for the reader but the most important story *The Line* has to tell is of the fortitude, camaraderie and initiative of ordinary Australian servicemen encountering the conflicts of capture. The text ultimately suggests that the qualities that distinguish a particular human being in peacetime are exactly the qualities that distinguish him in war.

Sample passage

'The War Years, 1940–1945' (pp.69–70)

'Still the pressure of work increased. Men who ate their morning pap before daylight must hurry to be back in camp before dark. Many came in later. Friends helped each other ...

But worse was to come. For weeks it had been said that the monsoon rains would bring cholera, and now both were here. One by one the victims were concentrated into a compound back from the creek. All knew there was little chance of survival if contracted, and everyone knew he might well be next.'

Summary

This passage from *The Line* is set in wartime and explores the harsh conditions under which the POWs worked on the line. Illness from malnutrition and disease is a constant threat, as is execution by the Japanese.

Questions for exploring ideas

- 1 How would you describe the conditions under which the POWs are forced to work on the line? Can this be seen as counterproductive to the construction of the railway?
- 2 What forms of violence do the Japanese employ in this passage? Think more broadly than just physical violence.
- 3 How do the POWs respond to the violence inflicted on them?
- 4 Does the passage reveal anything about the motives of the Japanese for inflicting violence on the POWs?

Discussion questions

- 1 In small groups, discuss the way that the violence of warfare spilt over into the engineering of the railway. In times of conflict, is the use of violence as a means of persuasion and punishment an irrational choice?
- 2 What prevents us from using the violence of warfare as a means of persuasion and response in other forms of conflict?

Focus on the features of the text

As well as drawing on ideas from *The Line* in your writing about *Encountering Conflict*, remember that the language and style of your writing may also be inspired by the structures and features of the text. For example, the following features of *The Line* may influence how you choose to use language in the texts you create:

- a hybrid form with two authors with distinct writing styles
- language has an intimate tone that re-creates events without exaggerating the emotions
- repetition helps reveal the devastating impact of events on the line; for example, see p.69 where 'it all happened over again, and again, and again'
- repeated metaphors, such as 'bootlessness', which represents the hardship that the men suffered and also their powerlessness during the POW experience (see pp. 67–9).

These are only a selection of the key features of the text. What other features can you find?

Activities

When completing these activities consider the key features of the text in your response.

- Locate other passages that reveal the violence inflicted on POWs. How does Arch Flanagan respond when he encounters conflict of this sort?
- Between p.97 and p.124 Martin Flanagan describes his experiences with Edward 'Weary' Dunlop after World War II. What conclusions does Dunlop make about the violence of warfare? Compare these conclusions with Arch Flanagan's on the same subject.
- Locate evidence of how Arch Flanagan felt about war before he went. Were his feelings realistic? Is there a turning point in Arch's attitude where he sees war as something other than what he was expecting?

Omagh* directed by Pete Travis*Overview**

Northern Ireland has, in the years since the partition of Ireland in 1921, been divided between its Protestant majority (loyal to the British Crown) and a large Catholic minority (loyal to the Republic of Ireland). In the late 1960s, the Irish Republican Army or IRA (the armed wing of the largely Catholic Sinn Fein political party of Northern Ireland) intensified a campaign of armed opposition to Protestant rule in Northern Ireland. Years of violence and terror followed, with bombings throughout Northern Ireland and on English soil. This campaign of bombings and assassinations was matched in savagery by an anti-Catholic campaign dominated by the Ulster Defence League.

In 1996, a ceasefire in sectarian warfare initiated a peace process that culminated in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, calling for the IRA to disarm and presenting a plan for power-sharing in Northern Ireland. Not all members of the IRA accepted the peace process, however, and in 1996 a breakaway IRA faction calling itself the Real IRA initiated attacks on targets in Northern Ireland. When a powerful car bomb was detonated in the Northern Ireland town of Omagh on April 15th 1996, the Real IRA claimed responsibility. The attack was widely seen as an attempt by the Real IRA to stall and indeed demolish the peace process.

We see the events of the Omagh bombing through the experience of one family who encounter the conflict – the Gallaghers who lose their son and brother Aiden in the explosion. We see the inner conflict they experience and their individual responses to the events, as well as the consequences of this conflict for the community as a whole. The film focuses, in particular, on Aiden's father Michael's quest for justice on behalf of his son, and his role in the Omagh Self Help and Support Group. This group's conflict with the police and the government reveals potentially deliberate incompetence in the investigation designed to preserve the peace process at the cost of truth and justice for the victims. By focusing on one particular, grief-stricken family's encounter with conflict, the film reveals the human cost of political failures.

Sample scenes

Picking up the Pieces (DVD Chapter 5)

Playing Politics (DVD Chapter 7)

More Meetings (DVD Chapter 9)

Summary

The first scene occurs after Aiden's funeral. Michael sees the British PM Tony Blair on television saying that he will find the perpetrators of the bombing. In the second scene, Michael and other members of the group meet with Gerry Adams, who tells them that he doesn't know the identities of those responsible for the bombing. In the third scene, Michael meets with an informant, John White, a former member of the Garda National Surveillance Unit who was keeping tabs on the Real IRA when the bomb went off. He tells Michael that the police knew a stolen car with a bomb would be crossing the border and had decided to let it pass through.

Questions for exploring ideas

- 1 What do you think are the ideas and themes that connect these three scenes?
- 2 What do you think the failure of the authorities to convict anyone for the Omagh bombing suggests about the political priorities of the parties involved in the peace process?
- 3 Given that we see the police receive a warning that a bomb is about to explode in Omagh – ‘Courthouse, Omagh, Main Street, half an hour’ – who do you think is to blame for the bombing?
- 4 After his meeting with John White, Michael becomes disillusioned with the search for justice. What helps him to resume his search?
- 5 Do these scenes suggest that Michael and the other members of the group shouldn’t rely on government and authorities to help them? Can political conflicts ever be resolved without their intervention?

Discussion questions

- 1 In small groups discuss why you think the film concentrates on political not religious differences.
- 2 In what ways can all the victims of the Omagh bombing be said to simply encounter conflict on a normal day? Is there any way to protect ourselves from such encounters?
- 3 In small groups discuss the effectiveness of the Omagh Self Help and Support Group as a response to the bombing. Does it provide a service that governments fail to at this time?
- 4 At the first meeting of the Omagh Self Help and Support Group (Getting Organised, DVD Chapter 6), the victims’ families find themselves in conflict with each other. From a variety of backgrounds and religious groups, the conflict they have unwillingly encountered is leading them to fight amongst themselves. Michael stands up and explains that ‘We’re not going to get anywhere if all we do is shout at each other ... We’re not going to get anywhere unless we do it together.’ Consider the ways in

which this scene reveals the way in which political conflicts, or wars, impact ordinary people in personal ways. What does the group reveal about the ways individuals and communities respond to conflict?

Focus on the features of the text

As well as drawing on ideas from *Omagh* in your writing about *Encountering Conflict*, remember that your writing may also be inspired by the structure and features of the film. For example, the following features of *Omagh* may influence how you choose to use language in your texts:

These are only a selection of the key features of the text. What other features can you find?

- documentary conventions such as natural lighting and the use of hand-held camera techniques make the events of the bombing and its aftermath seem real
- rapid editing between scenes in the lead-up to the bombing creates tension
- the use of sound during the bombing scene creates a sense of fear and chaos
- close-ups on the faces of the victim's families elicit an emotional response from the viewer and we experience what they feel
- flashbacks to the time when Aiden is alive emphasise the family's loss
- extreme close-ups when Michael makes important statements, for example, during his conversation with Gerry Adams, have the effect that he also addresses the viewer.

Activity

When completing this activity consider the key features of the text in your response.

- Using the internet or your library, do some research into responses to recent terrorist attacks, including 9/11 and the London bombings (7 July 2005). How did governments and authorities respond? How did ordinary citizens respond? In what ways did people come together to deal with the events? Do you think they were effective?

***The Secret River* by Kate Grenville**

Overview

A basic point of difference between people is the culture in which they are born and raised. The values inherent in a culture are not arbitrary; they are the touchstones of beliefs built up over generations of experience. *The Secret River* is the story of a clash of cultures, British-European and Aboriginal Australia. A conflict ensues when white settlers from Britain arrive in Australia and seek to make exclusive use of lands that are the traditional domains of Aboriginal peoples. The story focuses on the experience of the Thornhill family on two rivers, the Thames in England and the Hawkesbury in New South Wales. The Thornhills live a precarious life in London, struggling to keep food on the table and a shelter over their heads. Their experiences build up a catalogue of the values the Europeans brought with them to Australia and the conflict this puts them in with the Indigenous population.

The clash of the two cultures is depicted as inevitable, given their opposing values, but Grenville goes further than simply establishing this inevitability. She suggests that the values of Aboriginal Australians could well be judged to be more humane, more generous and more attuned to the spirit of the disputed land than those of the newly arrived Europeans. The Thornhills and the civilisation they represent speedily triumph over local traditions. Grenville reveals, however, that the cost of that triumph, to both the Thornhills and to the Aboriginal Australians, is devastating.

Sample passage

Part Three 'A Clearing in the Forest' (pp.139–41)

'A tent was all very well, but what marked a man's claim was a rectangle of cleared and dug-over dirt and something growing that had not been there before ...
It was why they were called savages.'

Summary

The passage explores the question of ownership and control of the land. It contrasts the different relationship the European settlers and the Aboriginal Australians have to the land and the consequences of this cultural conflict.

Questions for exploring ideas

- 1 Is there a point in this passage where the possibility of conflict emerges? What circumstances would be likely to produce such conflict?
- 2 What is Thornhill's immediate reaction to the discovery he makes?
- 3 What do you think Thornhill means when he says, 'Just wild hogs or such. Moles. Something like that'? What is suggested by Willie's remark, '*Moles, you reckon moles.*' Why do you think Willie is reluctant to contradict his father at this moment?
- 4 What later conflict in the story does this passage point to?
- 5 What is suggested in this passage about the role justice and injustice will play in the story that unfolds?

Discussion questions

- 1 In small groups, discuss the importance of open communication between cultures as a way of avoiding social conflicts. Can you think of any examples of conflict over cultural issues in recent years that were direct consequences of miscommunication?
- 2 Are there any positive outcomes of the cultural conflict depicted in *The Secret River*? How would you describe the legacy of this conflict for Australia as a nation?

Focus on the features of the text

As well as drawing on ideas from *The Secret River* in your writing about *Encountering Conflict*, remember that the language and style of your writing may also be inspired by the structures and features of the novel. For example, the following features of Grenville's writing may

influence how you choose to use language in your texts:

These are only a selection of the key features of the text. What other features can you find?

- characters are given distinctive ways of speaking to differentiate them and their culture; for example, Aboriginal Australian characters often have no dialogue, symbolising their historical silence
- characters have archetypal names, such as Thornhill, 'the blacks', 'the old man', 'old greybeard' and so on.

Activities

- Locate passages in the text that reveal the preconceived ideas the European settlers had about Australia. You may wish to put this information in a mind map.
- Using the internet or your library, locate artworks by early European-Australian artists that show how these artists imagined the Indigenous population. What do you learn about Aboriginal Australians from these images? In what ways do these images mirror the attitudes in *The Secret River*? In what ways are they different?
- Locate passages in the text that reveal a difference between William Thornhill's and Sal Thornhill's thinking about the 'blacks'. How would you summarise that difference?

When completing these activities consider the key features of the text in your response.

CLARIFYING THE IDEAS

Your knowledge and views about the Context will have been informed by your reading of the set texts as well as wide-ranging discussion. As your study of the Context develops, it is important to clarify and refine your ideas, for example, by summarising key arguments and/or sub-themes, and by discussing and debating these ideas. What you think or your point of view on the ideas is an important aspect of this part of your study.

Develop summaries

You can summarise key ideas and arguments about your Context in a number of ways.

- **Summarise ideas in a table.** Include four columns detailing the following: the key idea, your reflections or understanding of the idea, and how the idea relates to your texts with specific examples. Show how the texts expand and develop your understanding of the Context. In Unit 4, make connections between your texts. What similarities do they share in relation to the Context? What different ideas do they help you to clarify?
- Create a **mind map** to summarise key ideas.
- Make a **list of statements** (like those below) that highlight important aspects of the Context:
 - Conflict can divide and unite the people who encounter it.
 - Conflict can challenge a person's values.
 - An encounter with conflict can make you a better person.
 - Major conflicts often arise from minor misunderstandings.
 - Some conflicts have a history that makes them impossible to resolve.

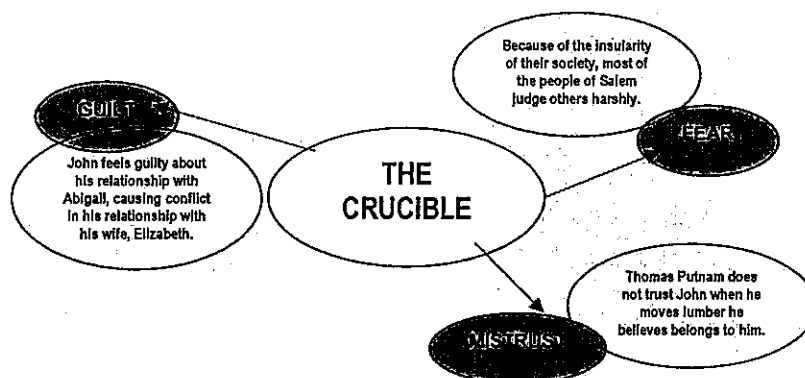
Stage a debate

A debate is a useful strategy for clarifying and presenting a point of view on the Context. The following topics will be a good place to begin, or you may wish to develop your own propositions based on the key ideas and arguments you have identified.

- That conflict cannot be resolved with violence.
- That conflict is often a struggle between the powerful and the powerless.
- That conflict may change a person for the better.
- That conflict and fear are inextricably linked.

Reflecting on the causes of conflict in your texts

Return to the list of 'causes of conflict' you created during the Building the Context section of your study. Create a mind map, like the example below, in which you link the causes of conflict to an example from the texts you have studied. You may wish to create two mind maps – one for each text – or find connections between the texts. You may also wish to create a similar map for the consequences of conflict in your text.



TOPICS FOR WRITING

In addition, see the articles on each text on the CD-ROM which provide sample topics for writing on this Context.

Studying a Context will help to highlight the connection between reading and writing. You will be able to draw on ideas and arguments from your Context to create your own written texts for a specified audience and purpose. The topics below will be useful for writing as you prepare for the SACs and the final exam. They are topics based around the Context and are therefore relevant no matter which texts in this Context you are studying.

- 1 'A conflict's importance lies not in its causes but in its consequences.'
- 2 'Often, how we respond to conflict depends on a variety of cultural factors out of our control.'
- 3 'Conflict is born from fear.'
- 4 'Who we are is truly tested and proven when we encounter conflict.'
- 5 'Without conflict, there is no progress or change.'

THE TEXTS

Flanagan, Arch and Martin 2005, *The Line*, One Day Hill, Camberwell East.

Grenville, Kate 2005, *The Secret River*, The Text Publishing Company, Melbourne.

Miller, Arthur 2000 (1953), *The Crucible*, Penguin, London.

Omagh 2004, dir. Pete Travis, Universal Studios. Starring Gerard McSorley, Michèle Forbes, Alan Devlin and Brenda Fricker.

OTHER RESOURCES

Books and short stories

Atwood, Margaret 1996 (1985), *The Handmaid's Tale*, Vintage, London.

Bolt, Robert 1990, *A Man for all Seasons*, Vintage, New York.

Dunlop, E.E. 1986, *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop*, Nelson, Melbourne.

(The book includes photos of the Hintok Camp.)

O'Brien, Tim 1991, *The Things they Carried*, Flamingo, London.

Winton, Tim 1998 (1987), *Minimum of Two*, Penguin, Camberwell.

Essays

Orwell, George 2000 (1943), 'Looking Back on the Spanish Civil War' in *Essays*, Penguin, London.

Films

Flags of our Fathers 2006, dir. Clint Eastwood, DreamWorks SKG. Starring Adam Beach, Jesse Bradford and Ryan Phillippe.

In the Name of the Father 1993, dir. Jim Sheridan, Hell's Kitchen Films. Starring Daniel Day-Lewis, Pete Postlethwaite and Emma Thompson.

Letters from Iwo Jima 2006, dir. Clint Eastwood, DreamWorks SKG. Starring Kazunari Ninomiya, Ryo Kase and Ken Watanabe.

The Crucible 1996, dir. Nicholas Hytner, 20th Century Fox. Starring Daniel Day-Lewis, Winona Ryder and Paul Scofield.

Veronica Guerin 2003, dir. Joel Schumacher, Jerry Bruckheimer Films. Starring Cate Blanchett, Brenda Fricker and Gerard McSorley.

Poetry

Wallace-Crabbe, C and Pierce, P (eds) 1994, *Clubbing of the Gunfire: 101 Australian War Poems*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

Walter, George, (ed.) 2006, *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, Penguin, London.

Websites

ABC Changi – The Thai Burma Railway,

www.abc.net.au/changi/history/burma.htm

'In Depth: The Omagh Bomb' 2005, *BBC News*, 21 January.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/northern_ireland/2000/the_omagh_bomb/default.stm

Indigenous Australia website,

<http://www.dreamtime.net.au/indigenous/index.cfm>

Kate Grenville's personal site, including Notes for Readers of *The Secret River*

<http://www.users.bigpond.com/kgrenville/>

Quotations

<http://www.brainyquote.com/>

<http://www.quotegarden.com/>

<http://www.quoteland.com/>

<http://www.wisdomquotes.com/>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Hillman is a novelist and biographer. His memoir, *The Boy in the Green Suit*, won the 2005 National Biography Award. He writes full-time and divides his working week between Warburton and Carlton.